

Urban Deer Management

In urban areas, deer populations can expand to nuisance and damaging proportions with the overabundance of deer usually being a reflection of human values rather than biological thresholds. As human and deer populations in Missouri have grown together there have been increases in deer-related concerns and conflicts. Extensive and continuing overlap in landscape use by people and deer has led to the enormous challenge of managing abundant deer populations in human-dominated environments, with a complex mix of human expectations, concerns, and values.

Despite the magnitude of deer-related impacts in urban and suburban environments, whitetails have a tremendous positive value to society. Many people in Missouri enjoy observing deer, and as a hunted big game species, deer also have a high recreational value to hunters, state agencies, and businesses that rely heavily on incomes from activities associated with deer hunting. It is critical that we manage deer populations in urban areas than maintain the social and cultural value of deer.

The goal of the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) urban deer management is to provide individuals and communities with information about deer management and to assist, as requested, in the management of white-tailed deer by providing management expertise, deer management plans, and population control options that provide residents and communities with effective ways to manage deer in accordance with the MDC Urban Deer Management Guidelines.

Extensive effort to inform and educate landowners is an essential aspect of managing deer in urban and suburban environments of Missouri. MDC staff has a long history of working with urban and suburban landowners and community leaders regarding human-deer conflicts. These efforts typically suggest that a multifaceted approach of lethal and non-lethal deer management strategies must be used as there is no single solution to alleviating all human-deer conflicts. Options offered and used in Missouri by landowners and communities include: non-lethal options such as habitat modification consisting of planting species non palatable to deer and cutting roadside vegetation further away from the shoulder of the roadway, temporary and permanent fencing, no feeding ordinances, capture and surgical sterilization of female deer, and public awareness campaigns about cautious driving on Missouri's roadways. Lethal options utilized include ordinance changes allowing controlled hunting, implement or advise on implementing controlled hunts on public lands in urban and suburban areas, the establishment of urban zones and urban firearms, and archery deer seasons in Kansas City, Springfield, St. Louis, and Columbia/Jefferson City metropolitan areas, sharpshooting, and trapping and euthanasia.

In order for the Department to further advance the urban and suburban deer management program and remain relevant in the future, additional management tools must be seriously considered and implemented. The Department has taken a progressive and proactive approach to urban and suburban deer management and will consider adding tools to the toolbox to help urban and suburban communities meet their deer management objectives.

Please provide your thoughts and comments about urban deer management.